

## Heritage thefts from churches

Churches across the country already suffering an unprecedented rise in metal theft, chiefly lead from roofs, are now facing the theft of artefacts which in some cases have been on display for hundreds of years and are part of the community's history. In March English Heritage reported that 70,000 listed buildings, 19 per cent of the listed buildings in England, were damaged by crime in 2011, although this is mainly metal theft from the roofs.

I have discussed the theft of medieval brasses before but it seems thieves have now turned their attention to sculpture.

In March the extreme left hand panel from the

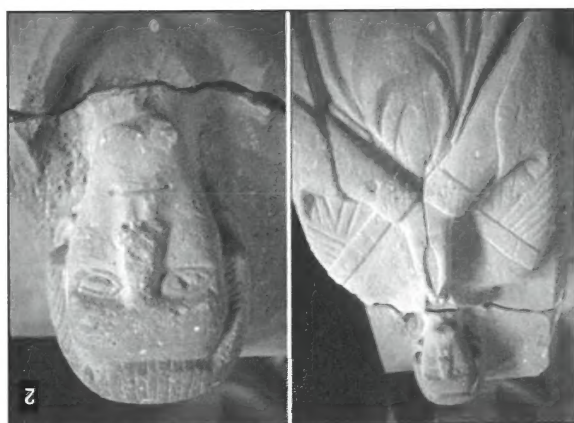
fourteenth-century alabaster reredos was stolen from St Peter's Church in **Drayton (1)**, near Abingdon.

The panel depicts the Annunciation and measures approximately 14in by 7in. Church warden Valerie Cross said: 'I think we're all in a state of shock. We're

all very upset by it'. The panels were discovered in the church grounds in 1814. It is believed they had been buried to prevent them being destroyed. This important reredos has often been illustrated in books on church architecture and fittings. Our image is by Martin Beek, by kind permission: you can find other images by him on [www.flickr.com](http://www.flickr.com)

During the first two weeks of April 2012 part of a stone effigy to Robert De Wakering was stolen from All Saints church **Newland (2)**, near Coleford, Gloucestershire, a church which he founded in the

thirteenth century. The head of the monument was



already detached but lay with the rest of the effigy in the grade one listed building until unknown offenders stole it. The item is 700 years old and has significant historical and community value. Our picture is provided by the police.

At some time around the first week of May 2012 a small memorial was taken from St Michael's Church, **Castle Frome (3)**, Herefordshire. I had much admired this touching figure and photographed it in 2009. It appears the thieves climbed onto a window ledge in the church and used a chisel to remove the carving from part of the window frame. The stone carving, depicting a knight holding a heart, is about nine inches by six inches in size. A police spokesman said: 'It is impossible to put a value on the stone carving but obviously it means a lot to the people who frequent this church. They are extremely upset that the carving has been stolen'. Me too!





A North Yorkshire church plagued by bats finally reopened last Christmas. St Hilda's Church in **Ellerburn (4)** near Pickering (picture by Nigel Coates) was closed for several months after the congregation lost its battle with a long-term infestation of Natterer's bats, which have lived in the church for ten years. This was the first time in its 1,000-year history that the church closed, but in September, following a lengthy campaign, it was granted a licence from Natural England to block up some of the access points which the bats have been using to colonise the church. As a compromise hundreds of bats will continue to live in the roof of the church, but not in the church itself, and their activity will be monitored.

Churchwarden Liz Cowley said the walls, floors and altar of the Saxon church had been covered with bat droppings and sprayed with urine. She said the woodwork, artefacts, stone flooring slabs, pews, choir stalls, pulpit and font had all been damaged and the

local Environmental Health Authority had to be called in after some of the church's helpers had fallen ill. Following the work on the roof being completed, a clean-up operation, which cost thousands of pounds and took a specialist team of five people two days to complete once was finished, gathered 13kg of bat droppings. Liz said: 'Nobody was allowed into the church unprotected as a result of the toxic aerosol which is created when old bat droppings are disturbed. My team of dedicated volunteers then followed on to polish wood and scrub stone. Further work will be required to restore the church to its former glory next summer'. Jonathan Mortimer, a solicitor in Harrogate, helped the church in its campaign and said: 'We must all keep our fingers crossed that the limited licence issued by Natural England will be sufficient next spring when the bats return in greater numbers'. Ashley Burgess, a member of the PCC, said: 'I anticipate that this year we will not have to put up with being bombed by bats flying around the church during our carol service as we have experienced in previous years'.



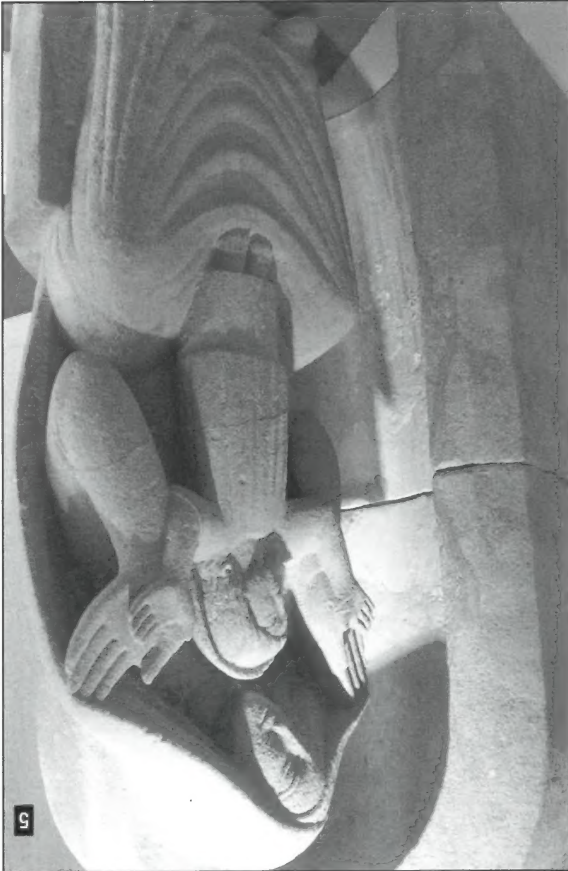


This may give other congregations plagued by these protected mammals some heart in their desire to preserve their ancient buildings. In my own travels some of the worst examples I have found were at Mark in Somerset, Stanford on Avon in Northamptonshire (with its priceless monuments and fittings) and Keyston in Huntingdonshire, Cambridgeshire, where the problem is so bad that the church had to be locked so the key-holder can warn welcome visitors about the problem under Health and Safety Regulations. At Keyston there is a rare fifteenth-century oaken cadaver effigy which has to be kept shrouded in polythene.



### *Sculpture finds a new home*

A small sculpture which lay forgotten for several decades has been re-housed at Glastonbury Abbey museum (to whom we are grateful for this image). The Catholic statue of the Madonna and Child (5) was commissioned in 1928 by Glastonbury priest, Fr Francis Burdett for St Mary's church in the town. The statue was carved out of limestone by British sculptor, Eric Gill and was first placed in a niche at St Mary's church for 10 years where it could be seen by passers-by, but was removed to enable work to make a larger building to be done. Because it didn't fit in with the new design the statue was moved to the church cemetery. Burdett's Madonna, as it was named, was left forgotten until the 1980s when it was identified as a work by the famous sculptor. Since then, the Catholic Church has been working to find a suitable place for it to be displayed. Father Kevin Knox-Lecky, of St Mary's Church, said:





a £10,000 Heritage Lottery grant. The medieval chasuble, an outer vestment worn by a priest at Mass, has been described as one of the finest surviving pieces of pre-Reformation embroidery. Eleanor Palmer, conservation officer for textiles, said it was an exciting opportunity to work on the vestment which she thought dated from about 1480. 'It's a one piece garment that slips over the head, in colour it's a very dark red, of very fine quality and the embroidered panel down the front called the orphrey is embroidered in three sections each depicting a different saint,' she said. 'The back is embroidered with the Holy Ghost represented by a dove; in the central section is the crucifixion.'

### Some restoration news

Last year saw the completion of extensive renovation and refurbishment work at **St Columba's Cathedral** (6) in (London)Derry. Restoration work on the Cathedral, which was in danger of severe structural damage, began in early 2010 thanks to key funding from the Northern Ireland Tourist Board worth £2 million. The 1641 building, the first Anglican cathedral to be built in the British Isles after the Reformation, has had disabled toilets provided and a restructuring of car park facilities. It is said to be Northern Ireland's second most popular tourist destination. Our image is from [www.irishviews.com](http://www.irishviews.com). An unusual restoration project is under way in Preston, not on a building but a garment. The item in question, a chasuble, belongs to the parish of St John's Roman Catholic Church in **Poulton-le-Fylde** (7), and our image comes from their website ([www-poulton-le-fylde-hcs.co.uk](http://www-poulton-le-fylde-hcs.co.uk)). Lancashire Museums Conservation Studio in Preston is restoring it through



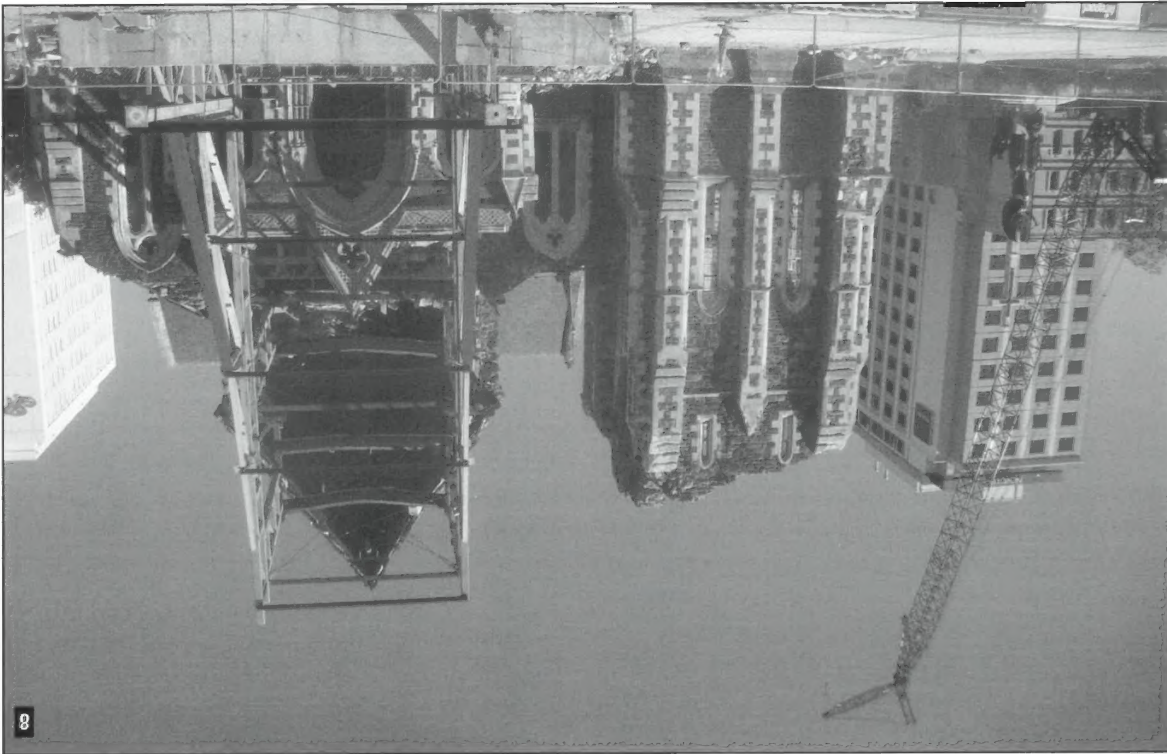


reconstruction. However the decision has been taken to demolish Scott's cathedral and draw up plans for a new cathedral on its site. Despite this there are still attempts to stop the deconsecration and clearance of the site using legal and press opinion to insist the Victorian stone building is not beyond repair.

Meanwhile the cathedral authorities have started work to erect a temporary cathedral which has been dubbed 'the cardboard cathedral' (9). Strong cardboard tubes will form the skeleton of the A-frame building, with timber, steel and concrete also used in the construction. The intention is to finish the building by Christmas. Designed to last at least 20 years, the 700-seat structure is the brainchild of Shigeru Ban, the Japanese architect responsible for temporary public buildings in quake-ravaged areas of Japan and Haiti. Richard Gray, a spokesman for the Transitional Cathedral Group, said the temporary cathedral would cost up to NZ\$5 million (£2.6 million), most of which was already in hand. 'The transitional cathedral is a symbol of hope for the future of this city, as well as being sustainable and affordable,' he said. 'The cathedral is confident it will attract interest nationally and internationally, drawing additional visitors to the

The 'twisted and shattered' **Anglican Cathedral (8)** at Christchurch has been discovered to be more damaged than first thought. The February 2011 earthquake cracked pillars, twisted walls, shattered stained glass, collapsed buttresses, fractured masonry and toppled the tower; and many aftershocks have further weakened what remained and finally toppled the rose window on the west front. Cathedral administration manager Chris Oldham said the true extent of the damage became clear only after staff returned to the site. 'The pillars inside have cracked and the whole building is actually in quite a sad way,' he said. 'The building is twisted. It has moved. The buttresses have stones coming out of them. If you look at the wall on the south side, you can see how the top half of it has moved one way and the bottom half of it has moved the other way. The stained-glass windows are all twisted and shattered on that side. When you go inside, the Camaru stone blocks have come away from the wall and are loose and at unusual angles'. The iconic building has seen public and press opinion split, with many people campaigning for a complete

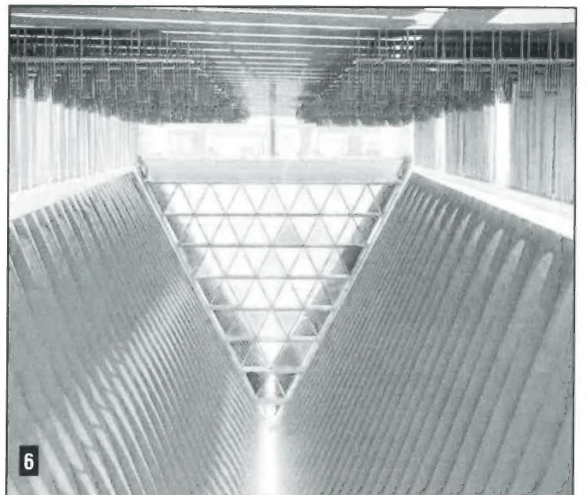
## Christchurch New Zealand Cathedrals – Update



To date the diocese has spent about \$3 million deconstructing the damaged parts of the cathedral, on cleaning and saving and numbering stones, windows and unique elements, and on transporting material, at night, to a secret storage site. Even if they were not used for any rebuild, they would act as a guide for the design of new elements. Currently deconstruction

shows the cathedral in September 2011, held up by shipping containers). start of this year (10) (our image, by PhilBeeNZ, had certainty and could be fully functional at the Marian College, in the 'fall zone' of the cathedral, Catholic College and the site-sharing pressure had been on to make the building safe so cathedral did not mean no work had taken place. The Ryan said the Catholic authorities' silence about the old gasworks. Management Board chairman Lance unfashionable part of the city near to the railway and Anglicans, the cathedral being built in an originally the benefit of being in a far less public space than the largely from view. Of course, the Catholics have had taken completely the opposite tack and disappeared issue' show unfolding in Cathedral Square. They have learned from the 'how not to handle a controversial space, the Catholics have obviously watched and commanded hundreds of column centimetres of about the fate of the Anglican cathedral has While the angst and the very public bickering [www.christchurchcathedral.co.nz](http://www.christchurchcathedral.co.nz).

Our images are from the cathedral's website, damaged beyond repair in the quake and demolished. vicarage and hall of St John's parish which was also city'. It is being built on the nearby site of the church,



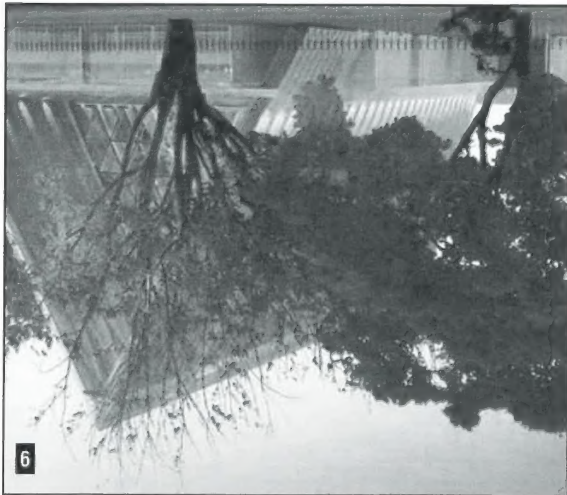
After announcing in his 2012 budget statement the imposition of 20% VAT for alterations to listed buildings (which were previously exempted), the Government will now expand the Listed Places of

### *VAT on alterations to listed churches*

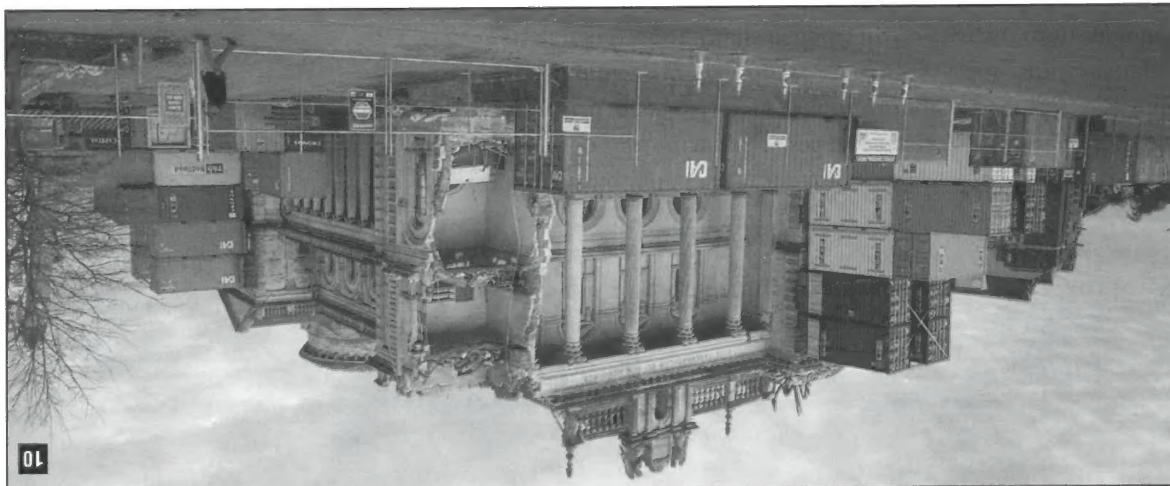


Ryan said discussions leading up to a decision on whether the cathedral would be rebuilt or demolished could well be at least six, and more likely twelve, months away. The cathedral's fate had to be considered in the context of it being just one of 20 damaged churches in the diocese. There were three options – demolition, rebuilding or mothballing, he said. The cost of a rebuild could be \$100m and would involve several years of work by stonemasons. Bishop Barry Jones said he would not make that decision until he was satisfied he had all the relevant knowledge. 'Not all the information has been gathered in yet about what is there. I'm prepared to wait as long as I have to, to get a full picture of what the actual position is'. Bishop Jones said the wider diocese would be involved in some way in the final decision on the fate of the building. 'We will need to have a pretty big sounding of what people think. It can't be a mass movement, but we have to have a good idea what Catholics are thinking'.

work had paused, but more material will be transported to the site in the months to come. There was a plan to remove more windows and a special plan would be needed to take out the main organ.







which she called the VAT ditty. It can still be seen here <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cEWgVkBKpel>



### *Church Fabric Condition Survey*

The Cathedral and Church Buildings Division (CCBD) of the Church of England recently received grant funding from English Heritage to commission a national survey of the condition of all Church of England church buildings. The work will take place between September 2012 and March 2013.

The CCBD says the results will help dioceses and the Church at national level, to understand the problems; and at local and national level, to prioritise resources and make the case for grant aid. It will also allow English Heritage to complete its Buildings at Risk Register in regard to listed Church of England churches.



### *Repair grants for places of worship*

From April 2013 the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) takes over the management of the Repair Grants for places of worship fund it has run in partnership for the last ten years with English Heritage.

There will be some changes in the focus as the new programme will recognize that repairing a building is only part of the story; it must also have a sustainable future by meeting the changing needs and expectations of both congregations and wider

Worship Grant Scheme to include alterations, and make available a maximum additional £30million of grant per annum. George Osborne announced 'The total fund will now stand at £42million, guaranteed for the next three years. That will be 100 per cent compensation, exactly as we promised in the Budget, for the additional cost borne by [listed] churches for alterations and should also go a long way to helping the situation with repairs and maintenance where in recent years they have not been able to get 100 per cent compensation for those repairs and maintenance'.

Tory MP Sir Tony Baldry, who represents the Church Commissioners in Parliament, said the Chancellor had conceded that 'insufficient thought' had been given to the impact of the tax rise, adding 'He listened to what we had to say, and has done his best to protect churches'. Labour MP Frank Field, chairman of the planning authority for English cathedrals, welcomed the move. Mr Field told Mr Osborne 'Can I congratulate you on the way you have dug yourself out of a hole into which you placed yourself'. However, Ben Cowell of the National Trust, said alterations to other listed buildings would still be hit and Labour culture spokesman Harriet Harman said 'It won't help the National Trust, all the museums, galleries, theatres, libraries and community centres that are in listed buildings; and which are important for heritage, tourism and local communities'.

Perhaps the most public (and original) objection to the VAT plan came from the wife of the Dean of Wakefield who posted a musical video to YouTube

In February 2012 fire damaged St Mary's church in **Charlbury, Oxfordshire**. Firefighters had to create a fire break by sawing through a fifteenth-century roof in order to save the building. A team of specialist cleaners were brought in as the building was smoke damaged; they worked until the end of April. Repairs to the roof and redecoration of the interior will follow. The damage was to the chancel roof, so as a temporary measure while the chancel is closed, the church has rotated the interior by 180 degrees, with the tower arch acting as a chancel arch, in front of which sits the nave altar.



### Finally . . .

Thank you to all the readers who send me snippets of information between editions. Although not all of them make it to the final feature, often due to space constraints, they are appreciated and can be discussed on 'ChurchCrawling', an Email group at Yahoo (<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/Churchcrawling/>). I can be contacted at churchcrawler@blueyonder.co.uk or by conventional means – Phil Draper, 10 Lambley Rd, St George, Bristol BS5 8JQ. Please note that photos or cuttings sent to me can only be returned if accompanied by SAE. The views expressed in the article are not to be taken as those of the Ecclesiological Society itself.

*The Society apologises for any accidental breach of copyright in the images used here.*

### In brief

In August 2011 a 5.8 magnitude earthquake shook the mid Atlantic coast of the United States causing significant damage to The **National Cathedral in Washington**, forcing it to close for safety checks and removal of damaged pinnacles. It has since reopened but repairs will run into millions of dollars. Also damaged was the Catholic cathedral basilica in **Baltimore** where cracks appeared in the dome. Repairs started in March 2012 and could take until Christmas. It was hoped the damage was mainly cosmetic rather than structural.



allocations according to listing. worship and it will not be dependent on separate

As at present, it will be open to all listed places of request specific help in this area. and learn about the building – applicants will be able within and beyond the congregation to participate greater focus on providing opportunities for those systems and maintenance ladders. There will be a the building, like kitchens, toilets, heating and lighting up to 15% of the overall project costs will be eligible high-level fabric repairs remain the priority. However, applications in February 2013. The Scheme will be worth a minimum of £25m each year. Urgent and The new programme will be open for to get involved with, and take care of, these buildings. meet these aspirations, and to encourage more people communities. The new programme hopes to better

*In the previous edition we carried a new feature – an account of a day's church crawling. My thanks go to Chris Stafford for his second article in the series, on an area of the country off the usual churchcrawler's track. As you'll see, the style is informal and relaxed – a chance for members to communicate their enthusiasm. Please get in touch with me (Phil Draper) if you want to share with members a recent day out visiting churches or you wish to tell us about one particular church which is a real favourite. My contact details are above.*



Following on from the day out in Northamptonshire in the last edition of *ChurchCrawler*, Ecclesiological Society member Chris Stafford takes us around some churches in one of his favourite parts of the world, Pembrokeshire in South West Wales.

### **Pembrokeshire – the Marloes Peninsula and above Chris Stafford**

I'VE BEEN GOING to Pembrokeshire for many years, my sister has lived there for fifty years, we've had many trips for family events and this year was no exception. Whilst there I like to fit in a few days exploring the local churches. Pembrokeshire churches are very different from my native East Anglian affairs. Indeed dating these very plain, simple buildings is a real challenge. In West Wales I exchange arches, arcades and clerestories for squints, tiny transepts and low naves designed to avoid the prevailing westerlies.

It's our last day churchcrawling in Pembrokeshire, I can't drag the long suffering Mrs Stafford around churches every day (sadly). The forecast is good and I'm wanting to visit some of the most westerly churches in the county on the Marloes peninsula, close to the sea to the north.

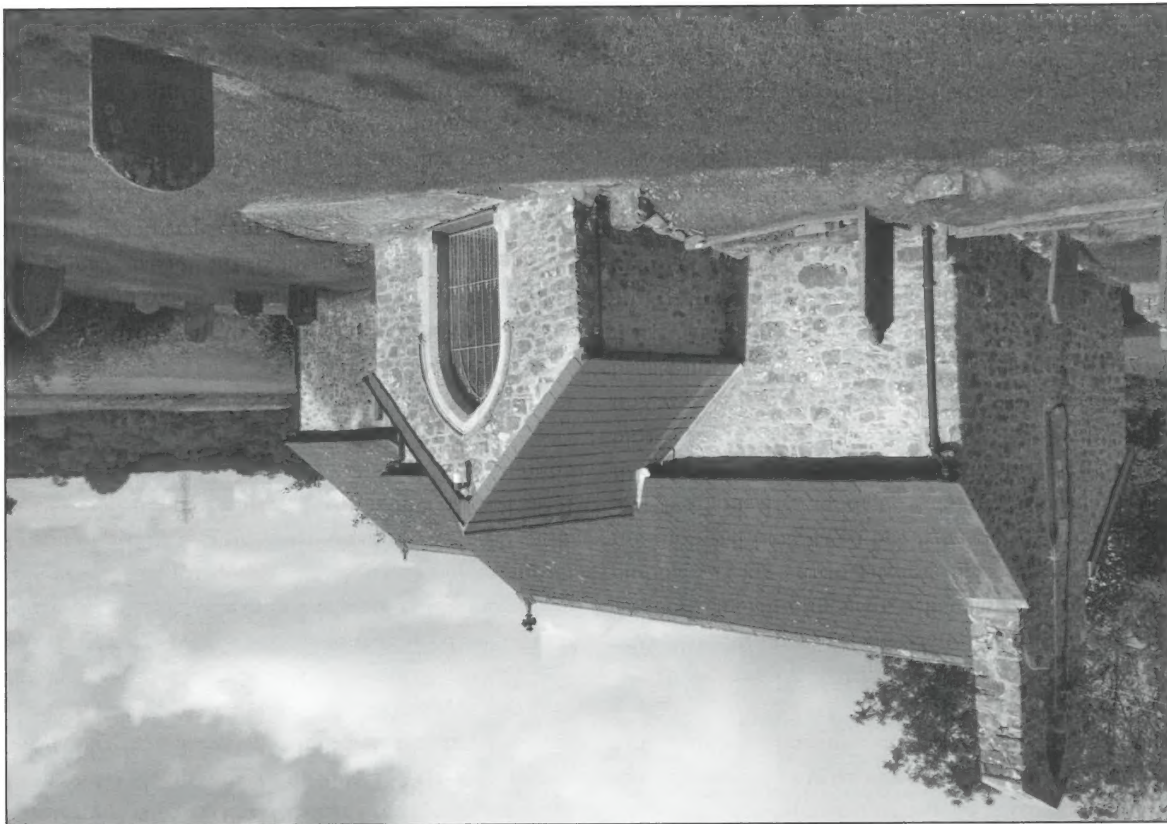


Fig. 1: Down by the river at Haroldston St Issels

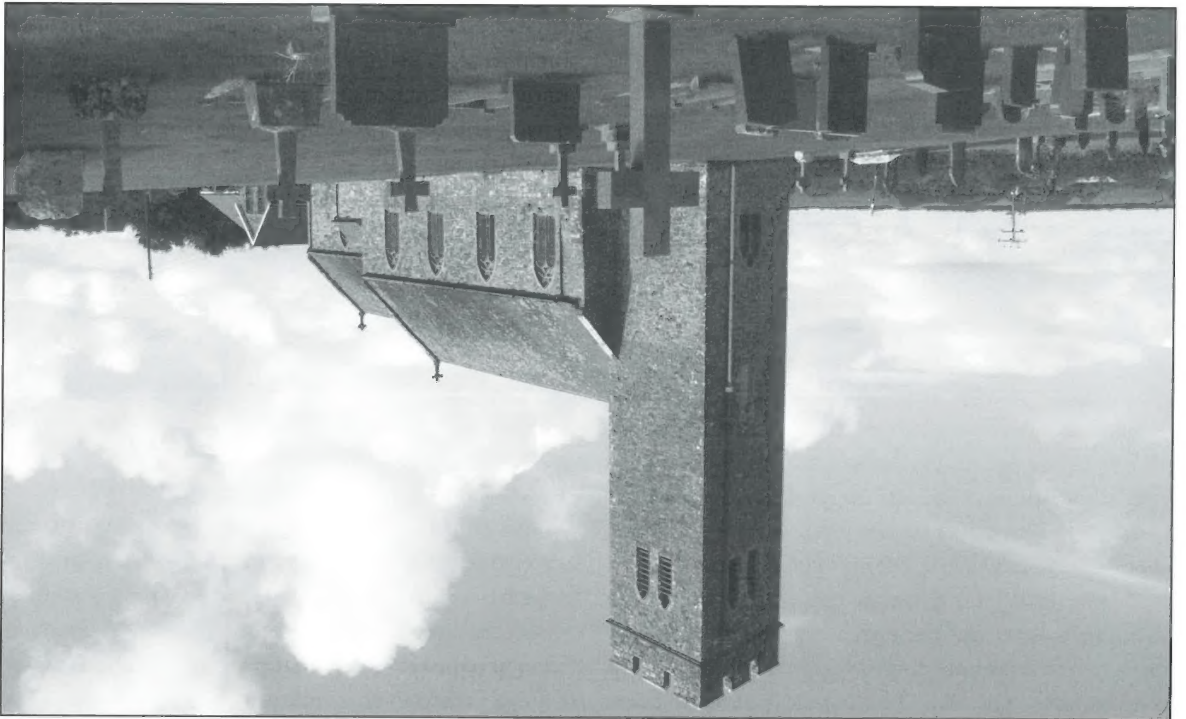


Fig. 2: The only proper tower of the day at Walwyn's Castle

On the way to the peninsula we pass close to the market town of Haverfordwest and detour to visit the remote church of St Issel at Haroldston (Fig. 1) to the south of the town, close to the Western Cleddau. It has just a farmhouse for company and sadly is locked, without a keyholder listed. It is very tiny and a peek through the windows reveals a very plain interior.

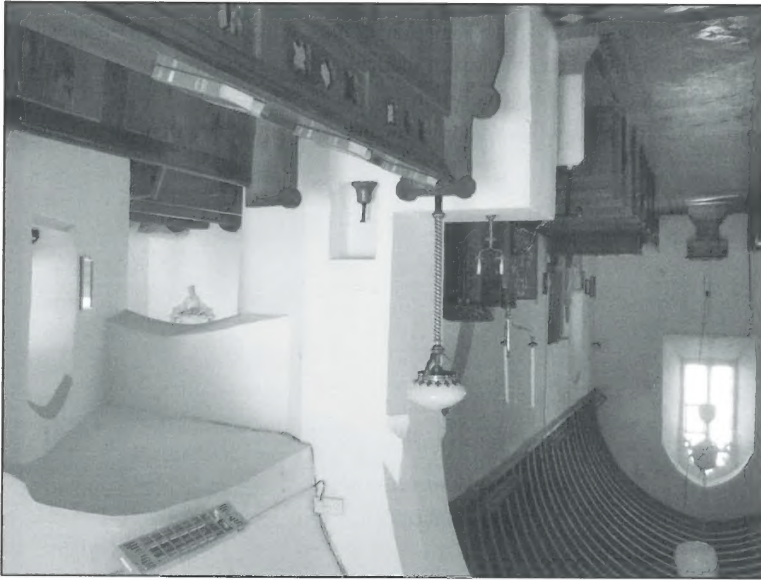


Fig. 3: One of the walk-through squints at Marloes



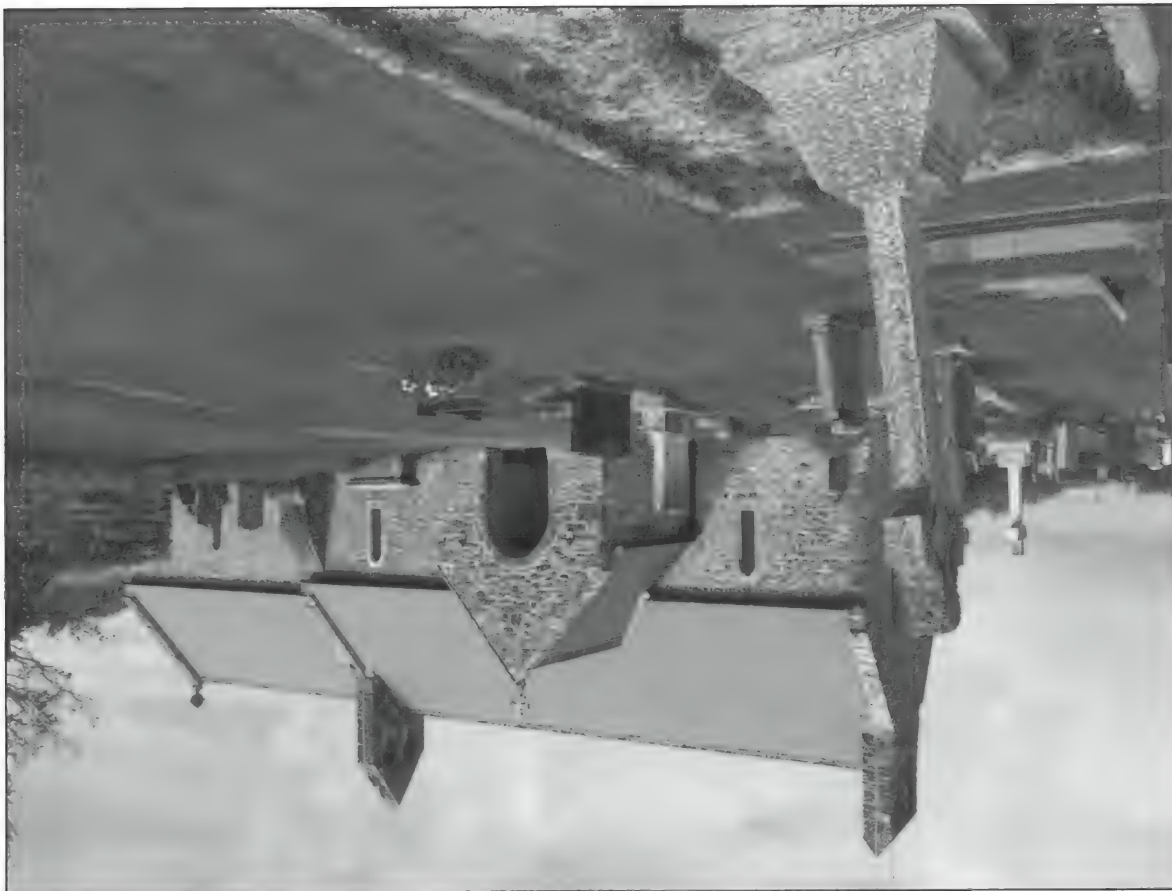
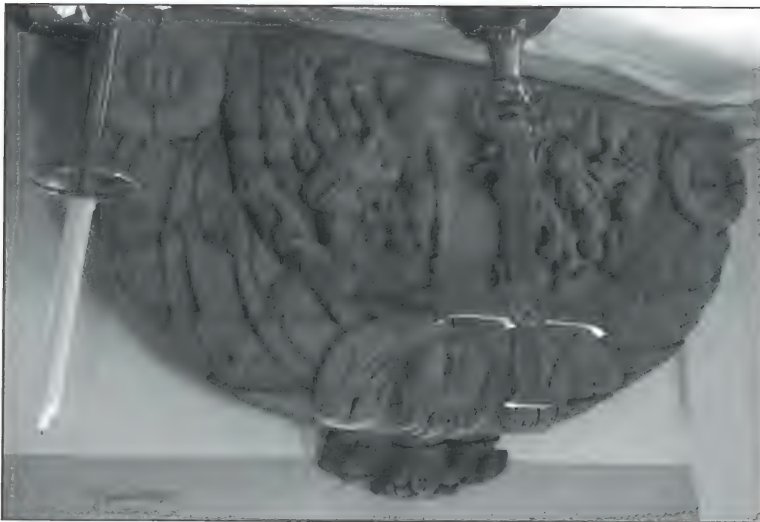


Fig. 4: St Brides church, with its unusual pair of double bellcotes

Heading west on the B4327, it is a short detour to **Walwyn's Castle** and the church of St James the Great (Fig. 2). Alongside the churchyard are the earthworks of the Norman castle. This church has a very attractive exterior with a typically tall slim Pembrokeshire tower, however heavily restored in 1878 and showing it. There is a keyholder listed, but the address is very vague, road signs are non-existent and despite going up and down the road twice we cannot see any name on any building that ties up with the information we have; so we are obliged to press on to the village which gives its name to the peninsula.

A rock rebuilt exterior to the prominent church of St Peter **Marloes** (Fig. 3), in a modest village exposed to the wild westerly winds in the remotest spot. There are no more villages until you get to America; the road past the village leads to the tiny slipway where the tourist boats take the bird watchers and day trippers over to the bird sanctuary of Skolmer Island. I was beginning to fear a day of inaccessible churches so it was a delight to finally get inside. The church, restored by Pearson in 1875-7 has no tower, however it does

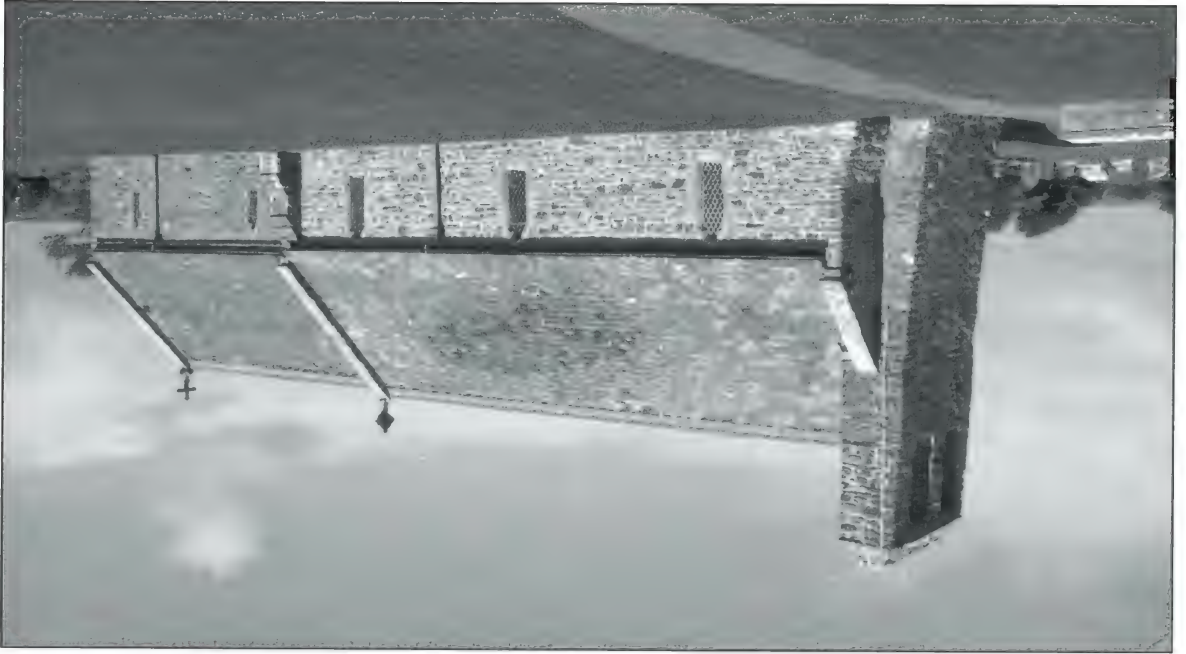
Fig. 5: The unusual sculpture on the north transept altar at St Brides



have a fine brace of squinted transepts, plus the chancel (fourteenth century) has a pointed vaulted roof, most attractive. The most interesting feature is the unusual "open baptistery", an immersion font alongside an interesting Norman font. *The Buildings of Wales* says it was to put in to counteract the growing threat from the Baptist cause.

To the north of Marloes is **St Brides** and the church of St Bridget (**Fig. 4**). To quote a retailer, this church is all location, location, location! It stands almost at the sea's edge, with the fine Victorian St Brides Castle perched higher up, overlooking the whole

Fig. 6: Talbenny has a bellcote with a batter





affair. The castle is one of those upmarket timeshare properties now, but was originally a seaside retreat for Lord Kensington. The church is the usual simple affair without tower, but unusually with not one but two double bellcotes, restored in 1868 by Charles Buckridge, who also provided the furnishings. The font is Norman and there is a small remainder of the medieval screen. One unusual feature is a modest sized semicircular carving (Fig. 5), sitting on a small altar in the N transept; the *Buildings of Wales* dates it to the early eighteenth century. It allegedly shows the visit of Sheba to Solomon; most interesting and carved with some flair. There are some very damaged effigies in the North transept and also the church boasts some good glass. Outside there are a set of Celtic monuments to the Kensington clan. This was the best church of the day and a candidate for best one of our short break.

Whilst St Brides was low down, almost by the water's edge, St Mary's church at **Talbenny (Fig. 6)** stands all alone on the cliff top, with fine views over the whole of St Brides Bay and the nearby seaside resort of Broad Haven. It has a very simple layout, just a long nave and short chancel, very rustic, restored in 1869 (nave) and 1893 (chancel). There is some interesting stained glass of 1974 by Frank Roper of Penarth.

Fig. 7: The strange outline of  
Waltonwest church

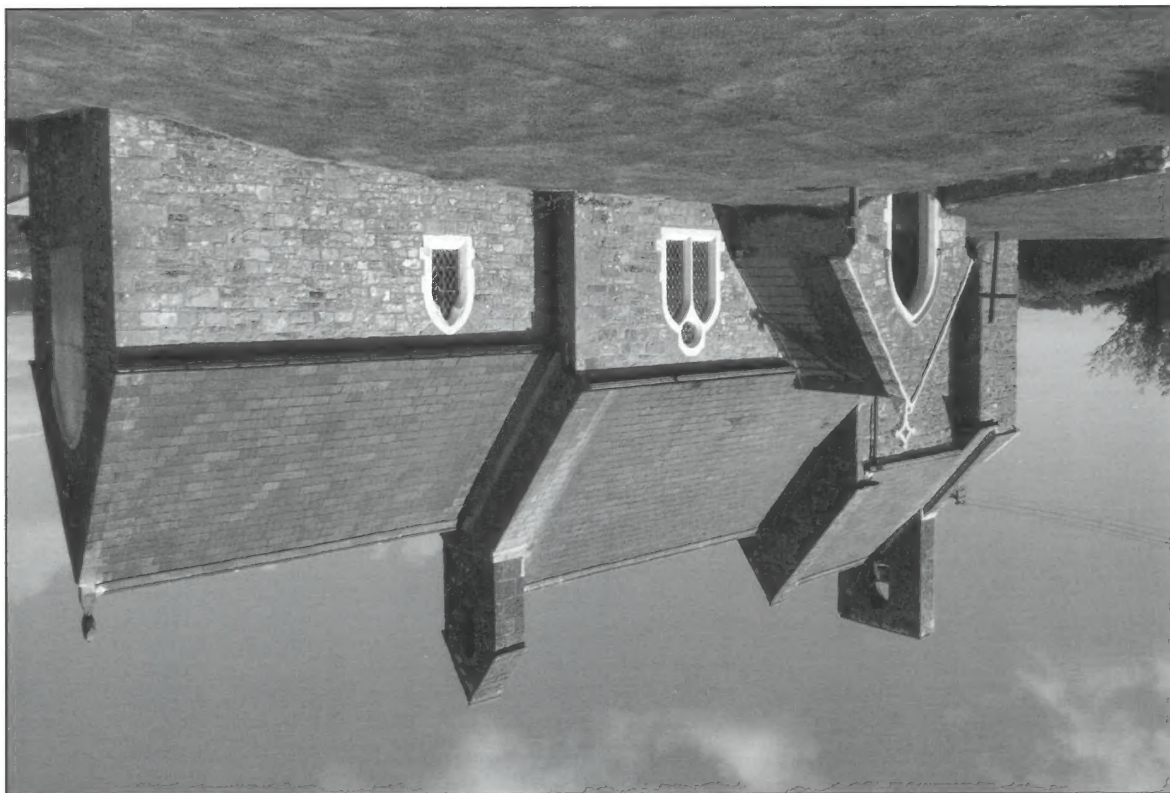
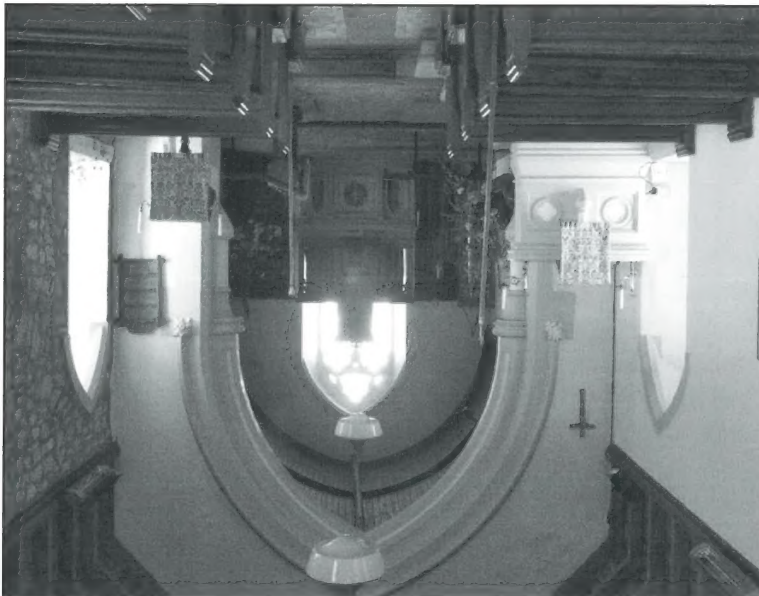


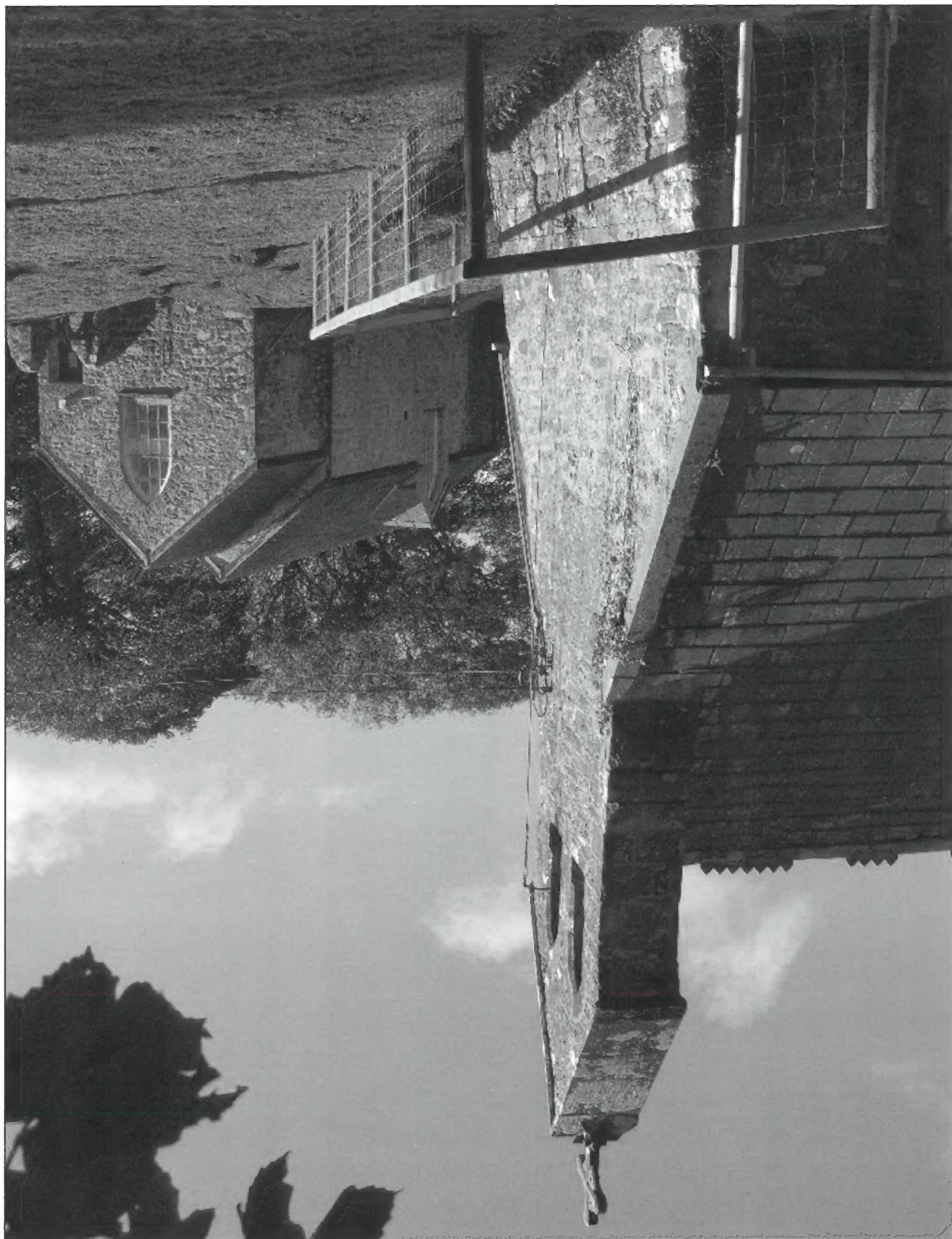
Fig. 8: Haroldston West's interior is a result of heavy restoration



From Talbenny we leave the peninsula and drop down steeply through Little Haven and turn briefly inland again to All Saints at **Waltonwest (Fig. 7)**. Standing in a circular churchyard this is a well kept church. The tower is much truncated and now topped with a bellcote, and like St Brides there is also a second bellcote over the chancel arch. Inside there is some good glass and a very fine tenth-century carved stone. The tower is vaulted and the church feels very 'blue' inside as every scrap of fabric is a bright royally turquoise blue. Wonderful . . .

Back to the sea at Broad Haven and to the north we come to **Haroldston West (Fig. 8)** and its church with an unusual dedication to St Madoc of Ferns. Set in a shallow valley and hidden from the nearby sea, this is one of those 'better on the outside' churches, restored heavily by E. H. Lingens Barker in 1883-5, including the ghastly stone pulpit, with the grim reredos coming along fourteen years later. Little in the way of redeeming features, a Norman font heading the list, but being open is a bonus, I suppose. Still following the narrow coastal road north we turn inland again to the church at **Nolton (Fig. 9)** also dedicated to St Madoc and another small and fairly crude church, restored again by E. H. Lingens Barker in 1876-7, with little of note inside, except an odd corbel and the almost obligatory Norman font. There is a very worn figure in the porch that spent some time as a gatepost before being returned to the church, hence the two holes in the front of it. Also in the churchyard is an attractive schoolroom of 1810. Continuing on





*Fig. 9: Nolton church and schoolroom, a happy pairing*

*All photographs taken by the author*

to the nearby seaside village of **Nolton Haven** (Fig. 10), we pass a chapel. Originally built for the Congregationalists in 1858 and built in the local grey sandstone, this is now an Artists Gallery, but it was getting late in the day and the Gallery was closed, thus we were not able to inspect the pews and pulpits from 1907. Instead we take time out to relax on the beach watching the waves break noisily over the rocks.

Churches and wonderful scenery, what more can you want in a day out?



Fig. 10: It wouldn't be Wales without one chapel - Nolton Haven

CHURCH CRAWLER AUGUST 2012